

## Green To Go Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Green to Go?

The City of Minneapolis ordinance which:

- Bans polystyrene packaging for food sold or given away when the food is prepared on-site for immediate consumption or to-go.
- Requires food and beverages prepared for immediate consumption and to-go be placed in environmentally acceptable packaging, which is packaging or containers that are reuseable, recyclable, or compostable.
- Requires recyclable materials to be recycled.
- Required compostable plastic to be composted.


### What is immediate consumption?

Immediate consumption is food packaged on-site that is intended to be consumed immediately or taken to go that does not need any additional preparation.

### What is polystyrene?

Polystyrene is commonly found in two forms: expanded and rigid.

*Expanded polystyrene* is a lightweight foam product (Styrofoam™).

*Rigid polystyrene* is a plastic, often found in black or clear. It is marked with a #6 inside the three chasing arrows symbol. 

Both expanded polystyrene foam and rigid polystyrene plastic are not allowed under the ordinance unless the product is exempted from the ordinance.

### The following products are temporarily exempt until April 22, 2017

- Polyethylene (PE) lined hot and cold cups and containers (soup, etc.)
- Rigid polystyrene (plastic) lids for PE lined hot cups and containers. Lids are marked with a #6 inside three chasing arrows.

Product exemptions will be reviewed annually as required by the ordinance.

### Are any products are exempt from the ordinance?

- Plastic films less than 10 mils thick. 10 mils is about the thickness of two-and-a-half sheets of paper.
- Foods prepackaged by the manufacturer, producer or distributor

### What about utensils, straws and stir sticks?

These products are not packaging. They do not need to be reuseable, recyclable or compostable.

If you need this material in an alternative format please call the Minneapolis Health Department at (612) 673-2301 or email [health@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:health@minneapolismn.gov). Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons may use a relay service to call 311 agents at (612) 673-3000. TTY users may call (612) 673-2157 or (612) 673-2626. Attention: If you have any questions regarding this material please call 311 or (612) 673-2301; Hmong - Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu (612) 673-2800; Spanish - Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame al teléfono (612) 673-2700; Somali - Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la' aan wac (612) 673-3500.

### **What packaging is recyclable?**

Recyclable packaging includes: glass bottles, aluminum cans and some plastic food and beverage packaging. Preferable plastic packaging is:

- Polyethylene Terephthalate (#1 PET or PETE)
- High Density Polyethylene (#2 HDPE)
- Polypropylene (#5 PP)
- Clean aluminum foil or pans. If aluminum foil or pans are dirty, they are trash.

### **What products are reuseable and returnable?**

Food or beverage containers or packages that can be refilled at a retail location or returned to the distributor for reuse at least once as a container for the same food or beverage. Includes: water bottles, growlers, milk containers and bulk product packaging.

### **What products are compostable?**

- Products which are BPI certified or meet ASTM standard D6868.
- Unlined paper

BPI = Biodegradable Products Institute <http://www.bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Program.html>

ATSM = American Society for Testing and Materials <http://www.astm.org/>

### **Are products marked degradable, bio-degradable, oxo-degradable, earth friendly, acceptable?**

No. Items labeled as biodegradable, oxo-degradable, degradable, earth friendly, or other “green” sounding terms are not compostable. These products fragment into smaller and smaller pieces of plastic, which at this time cannot be removed from the environment.

Compostable products need to be BPI certified or meet ASTM standards D6400 or D6868 standards to comply with the City of Minneapolis Green To Go ordinance.

### **Confusing Packaging**

Beware of packaging that does not meet Green To Go requirements. Health Inspectors are seeing products represented as meeting the ordinance, but do not meet it. Some of the products are beige and resemble compostable to-go containers. The symbol on the bottom of the products is a number six inside the chasing arrow triangle. That symbol means the product is polystyrene, which is not an acceptable packaging material under the ordinance.

Terms such as “green alternative,” “degradable,” “biodegradable,” and “sustainably sourced” are marketing terms. They do not indicate if a product meets Green to Go requirements.

### **Do catering companies have to comply with Green To Go?**

Catering companies licensed by the City of Minneapolis, another city or the state do not have to comply with Green To Go. If a restaurant also offers catering, the restaurant needs to comply with the ordinance, but the catering business is not required to comply.

### **Are any businesses exempt from the ordinance?**

Hospitals and nursing homes are exempt. They do not need to comply with the ordinance.

### **Why are plastics #1, 2, and 5 preferred?**

There is a robust market for these plastics.

### **If polystyrene is banned, why do I still find foam packaging and #6 plastic containers?**

The ordinance applies to food prepared for immediate consumption and packaged on-site. Product packaged by a manufacturer or at an off-site commissary might be in non-compliant packaging or containers. Examples of products that might be found in non-complaint packaging are:

- Raw meat
- A whole rotisserie chicken
- A whole sheet cake

### **Why does leftover food need to be emptied out of recyclable containers?**

Food scraps contaminate recyclable products. Too much food contamination can result in a load of recyclable material being rejected by the recycling company. In that case, the material is not recycled. The material is disposed of as trash.

### **How do I make a complaint if I receive food in a foam (Styrofoam™) container?**

Call 311 or send an email to [minneapolis311@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:minneapolis311@minneapolismn.gov). Businesses are allowed to use up existing supplies of non-compliant products.

### **What are the plastic acronyms?**

**HDPE** - High Density Polyethylene, plastic #2. Commonly used for milk and detergent bottles.

**PE** – Polyethylene is a plastic coating used on some paper food-service items (for example cups, soup bowls, to-go containers, etc.) PE lined paper products are not recyclable or compostable and should be placed in the trash.

**PET/PETE** - Polyethylene Terephthalate, plastic #1. Commonly used for beverage bottles. Plastic sauce containers, cups, and clamshells are commonly made with PET or PP

**PLA** - Poly lactic acid. Compostable plastic made from corn or other renewable resource. Paper products lined with PLA plastic that meet the ASTM D6868 standard are fully compostable.

**PP** – Polypropylene, plastic #5. Plastic sauce containers, cups, and clamshells are commonly made with PP, PET, or PS plastic. Yogurt cups, cottage cheese, sour cream and butter and margarine tubs are several household items commonly made out of PP plastic.

**PS** – Polystyrene - Commonly found in two forms: expanded and rigid.

Expanded polystyrene is a lightweight foam product. Rigid polystyrene is a plastic, often found as black or clear plastic. It is marked with the #6 in three chasing arrows symbol.



**What if a building does not have room for an additional dumpster for recycling or organics collection?**

Some buildings have a small loading dock or trash collection area. The city is working with building owners to allow them time to work out solutions to trash, recycling, and organics collection issues. Some businesses may need to use recyclable containers and delay adding compostable containers until their building's trash collection area is able to accommodate additional dumpsters.

If you do not control the waste and recycling system at the building (ex. multi-use building), contact the property manager/owner to discuss necessary changes to the system for compliance with Green To Go.

Contact Hennepin County for free signs and additional information about business recycling programs. Hennepin County offers on-site assistance, and grants to add or improve recycling and organics recycling programs. Visit [www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling](http://www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling) for more information.

**Questions about Green To Go?**

Call 311 (outside of Minneapolis call 612-673-3000) or send an email to [food@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:food@minneapolismn.gov)